

POLITICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

279

possessed the insight*to realise and the courage to proclaim that the Russian Empire was too rotten to wage war either with Japan or the Central Powers. He died in 1915, a few months too early to witness the fulfilment of *his* darkest anticipations.

Jswolsky commenced his Memoirs when the Bolshevik revolution deprived him of his Embassy in Paris, but he had only brought his narrative up to his appointment as Foreign Minister in 1906 when he died. His successor Sazonoff, a better but a smaller man, employed his closing days in France in the same way. Wisely limiting himself to his six years in office, he lived just long enough to complete his task. Though he had no desire for war, he was quite ready to risk a world-wide conflagration for the maintenance of what he regarded as just Russian claims in the Near East. His patronage of the Balkan League in 1912, which led Poincare to exclaim : " Mais c'est une Convention de Guerre," is defended on the ground that the Balkan States could not neglect the golden opportunity of the Tripoli war. Turkish rule in the Balkans, he explains, was a hideous anachronism. He realised the possibility of a European conflict; yet " not to help Serbia and Bulgaria to realise their aims meant not only the abandonment by Russia of her historical mission, but the surrender without a struggle to the enemy of the Slav peoples of positions won by the efforts of centuries." The author of that revealing sentence can hardly be reckoned among the champions of peace. He disclaims Germanophobia, but the Liman Mission to Turkey stirred him to passionate excitement. Hostility to Austria, whom he holds responsible for the catastrophe in 1914, runs like a red thread through his book. Germany is condemned,

not for a will to war, but for giving rein to the Austrian steed. Europe staggered into war because neither of the two Eastern Empires was willing to face a loss of prestige.

Like most of the ex-Ministers of the Tsar Count Kokovtsoff settled in France, where he devoted himself to the vindication of his career. *Out of the Past* begins with his appointment as Minister of Finance in 1903 on the eve of the Japanese war, and deals in detail with the crowded years down to his fall at the opening of 1914. The account of the Dumas, of the financial recovery from the Japanese war, of the economic development of the country, of his colleagues, of his occasional contacts with foreign affairs, are only less interesting than his pictures of the Tsar, the Tsarina, Rasputin and the Court. The book